

O ISRAEL

Rom 9:4-5; 9:30-32; 10:5-13

I. WHO, EXACTLY, is ISRAEL? THE PEOPLE OF GOD!

A. *Ethnos*: a select (an elect) people

1. The man: Jacob/Israel (“Prince of God”); only twice called “Israel” and then only by God (Gen 32:28 & Gen 35:10)—clearly not by virtue of his character!
2. The 12 Tribes (Israelites)—sons of Jacob, ancestors of tribes ultimately delivered from Egypt and occupy (Promised) Canaan Land
3. The Northern Kingdom (Israel) following King Jeroboam I; ultimately dispersed as “10 Lost Tribes”
4. The Modern state: Israel, est. 1948

B. *Ethos*: a religious persuasion, true (faithful) to God (NB. Dietrich von Hildebrand’s insights)

1. “Righteous Ones,” i.e. “Remnant”—persons (7,000 revealed to Elijah) faithful to Yahweh; (thus some among *ethnos* Israel not part of redeemed *ethos* Israel)
2. Christians appropriate “Israel” Faith
 - a. Stephen re “Church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38)
 - b. Paul re Gentiles (Rom 9-11)
 - c. Various terms: Kingdom of God; People of God; Mystical Body of Christ;
 - d. St Augustine: *The City of God*—basic, influential Christian historiography

II. WHY IDENTIFY AS SUCH? PRECIOUS PRIVILEGES!

- A. Sonship: adoption—cf. Rom 8:14-17 re “sons” via Christ; thereby pray “Our Father” & enjoy fellowship with Him
- B. Glory: *Shekinah* epiphany/presence—cf. Jn 1:14, 17:22 re Christ’s glory shared with faithful
- C. Covenants: treaty ties secured with Abraham, Moses, David—cf. Heb 8:7-13
- D. Law: Moses & Sinai—cf Mt 5:17-20 re Jesus’ fulfillment
- E. Cult: *latreia*/worship—cf. Heb 9:11-13 re acceptable ceremonies; evident in Early Church worship services
- F. Promises: prophets have spoken God’s Word—cf Acts 2:36-39 re appropriation; NB: II Peter 1:3-4
- G. Patriarchs: Abraham *et al.*—cf Heb 11:1-40 re litany of faithful
- H. **In Sum**: Christ—cf Heb 1:1-4 re the *finale*

III. HOW to QUALIFY? “RIGHTEOUSNESS of FAITH (“by grace through faith”)

- A. Gentiles’ unexpected superiority (when better attuned to Abrahamic faith)
- B. Because the Word is ever near to all mankind (10:8)
- C. Secured by confessing and believing Word/Christ (10:9)
- D. Consequently: call on His Name (10:13)

“The Jews and the Christian West,”
in Dietrich von Hildebrand, *My Battle Against Hitler*

Israel—Representative People of Humanity

271 //@ Like no other people, Israel was a classical representative of humanity. I do not say that it possessed this role on the basis of its natural disposition but that it became this by divine election.

271 //@ Israel was the classical representative people of humanity (*Menschheitsvolk*) on two grounds. It was this, first of all, through the unique spirit that it radiated and by which it was permeated: Israel was the only people conscious of man’s metaphysical situation before God, the only people whose life unfolded *in conspectu Dei*—in the sight of God. If we think of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or of Moses and David, we never encounter just one or another ethnic characteristic (*volkische Eigenart*) but man *qua* man in his direct confrontation with God.

272 //@ All that is human can be grasped in its true greatness and depth only when seen in the light of God, in whose image man is created.

272@ Israel was the only people to whom, before the fullness of time, God showed his countenance, the only people he called by name, in such a way that they came into full consciousness of the need for redemption and cried out to heaven for two thousand years: “*Ostende nobis, Domine, faciem tuam et salvi erimus*:—“Show us your face Lord and we will be saved.”

272 //@ The history of Israel—which, as Theodor Haecker says, alone among the nations had a sacred history—has to do not just with the concerns of a particular people but with what is of real and ultimate significance for every human being. One would have to be blind to read the Old Testament without being deeply moved by the grandiose, indeed, the classical humanness (*Menschlichkeit*) by which everything is suffused, yet which follow solely on the fact that everything is filled with a sacred breath of eternity. “*In lumine tuo videbimus lumen*,” says the Psalmist, “In your light we see light,” and this applies to the entire greatness of humanity that the Old Testament brings before our minds.

273 //@ Israel was the only people whose inner point of unity lay not at a racial or cultural level but on the religious level. True belief in the one God and the awaiting of the Messiah constituted the “form” of Israel’s unity. The knowledge of that which for all of humanity is the one great, ultimate, and decisive concern held Israel together interiorly. Israel was the representative people of humanity because it was the religious people par excellence and because the religious question is the question of humanity as such, because God is the absolute concern for all human beings, the concern that addresses each human being individually, whatever his particular characteristics may be: *Tua res agitur!*—This concerns you!

[274] “Israel was the representative people of humanity in yet a second respect. It is the people to whom God spoke, among whom he revealed himself to humanity, the people he chose to be representatives of all humanity, to whom he addressed words that are the concern of all humanity.

274@ And he chose this people—which through revelation became the representative people of humanity more than merely extrinsically—in order to bestow human nature upon his only begotten Son. The fact that Christ in his human nature was a Jew, that in being born a Jew of the Virgin Mary he took on human nature fully, forms the character of the Jewish people’s representation of Humanity in the deepest and clearest way.

276 // The role of representative of humanity, once that of Israel, has now passed over to the Church of Christ.

St. Augustine: *The City of God*

“ . . . for all the differences of the many and very great nations . . . there exist no more than the two kinds of society, which, according to our Scriptures, we have rightly called the two cities. One city is that of men who live according to the flesh. The other is of men who live according to the spirit” (Bk XIV, ch 1).

“In fact, this is the main difference which distinguishes the two cities of which we are speaking. The humble City is the society of holy men and good angels; the proud city is the society of wicked men and evil angels. The one City began with the love of God; the other had its beginnings in the love of self” (XIV, 12).

“What we see, then, is that two societies have issued from two kinds of love. Worldly society has flowered from a selfish love which dared to despise even God, whereas the communion of saints is rooted in a love of God that is ready to trample on self. In a word, this latter relies on the Lord, whereas the other boasts that it can get along by itself. The city of man seeks the praise of men, whereas the height of glory for the other is to hear God in the witness of conscience. The one lifts up its head in its own boasting; the other says to God: “Thou art my glory, thou liftest up my head” (XIV, 29).

“Now, the first man born of the two parents of the human race was Cain. He belonged to the city of man. The next born was Abel, and he was of the City of God” (XV, 1).

“Now, it is recorded of Cain that he built a city, while Abel, as though he were merely a pilgrim on earth, built none. For, the true City of the saints is in heaven, though here on earth it produces citizens in whom it wanders as on a pilgrimage through time looking for the Kingdom of eternity” (XV, 1).

“Notice that it is nature, flawed by sin, that begets all the citizens in the world community, whereas nothing but grace, which frees nature from sinfulness, can bring forth citizens of the heavenly City” (XV, 3).

“One is the city of ‘belongings’ here in this world; the other is the City of ‘longings’ for God. Once started on their way, they take different roads, each to the proper doom or destiny it deserves (XV, 21).

“ . . . She [City of God] holds that eternal life is the supreme good and eternal death the supreme evil, and that we should live rightly in order to obtain the one and avoid the other. Hence the Scriptural expression, ‘the just man lives by faith’” (XIX, 4).

“The City of God does not care in the least what kind of dress or social manners a man of faith affects, so long as these involve no offense against the divine law. For it is faith and not fashions that brings us to God” (SIX, 19).

“What is not indifferent is that he love truth and do what charity demands” (XIX, 19).

“All that is needed is spiritual rebirth to eliminate, after death, the consequences, including death, of carnal birth’ (XXI, 16).

“For, it was this same God who, in the beginning, created the universe and filled it with all those things that the eye can see and all those realities which the mind can know. Of all such creations the highest were the spirits to whom He gave the gift of intelligence and the power to behold God and to be filled with His beatitude. These He has linked by a common bond of love in a single society which we call the holy and heavenly City. In this community, God is the life by which the spirits live. He is the food on which their blessedness is fed” (XXII, 1).